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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KHARTOUM 000281

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DEPT FOR AF A/S FRAZER, AF/SPG, AF/SE WILLIAMSON

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [PHUM](#) [SU](#)

SUBJECT: S/E WILLIAMSON'S MEETING WITH ABYEI ADMINISTRATOR
EDWARD LINO

Classified By: CDA Alberto Fernandez, Reason: Section 1.4 (b) and (d)

1. (C) SUMMARY: In his November 26 meeting with Special Envoy Williamson, SPLM-appointed Abyei administrator and Darfur Task Force member, Edward Lino, stated that Abyei, though currently stable, was near explosion only days ago. According to Lino, the National Congress Party has attempted to derail a successful Dinka-Misseriya reconciliation initiative, mobilized the Popular Defense Forces and militias in Abyei, and overall obstructed progress on Abyei's numerous issues. Lino also discussed a proposed Misseriya-Dinka conference in May, the need for further humanitarian and development support for Abyei and its returning IDPS, and developments in Darfur (specifically calling for support of the Darfur Partners Forum, food for peace initiatives, and further effort to unify rebel movements.)

ABYEI STABLE, BUT IT ALMOST EXPLODED

2. (C) Lino noted that three days ago the situation in Abyei was almost out of control. Lino stated, "We told the NCP point blank 'In Abyei, one bullet could mean that the whole thing that explodes.'" Lino stated that the NCP, and not the Misseriya, are ultimately responsible for this. They have been moving in the Popular Defense Forces and militias into Abyei. "They almost led everything to the point of no return," stated Lino. Lino said that following efforts by First Vice President Kiir who directly told President Bashir that his party is responsible for Abyei, the situation has become much calmer. According to Lino, four days ago the Dinka-Misseriya held a meeting in Abyei which resulted in a resolution where each party agreed to not take up arms. "The NCP does not want peace, and they reacted to this meeting trying to undermine what the Dinka and the Misseriya achieved," stated Lino. Although the situation has significantly calmed and he continues to urge restraint, Lino said that other voices and publications such as the radical pro-government "Intibaha," try to undermine his initiatives and press conferences.

3. (C) Lino also warned that other elements could destabilize Abyei. He said that a change in attitude of some groups such as The Kordofan Committee for Development, a large organization with a presence in both North and South Kordofan, could decide to take up arms, and it could lead to war in all of Kordofan (a region even larger than Darfur that shares many of its characteristics). He also stated that the area around Bahar Al-Ghazal river could easily ignite with violence because of NCP provocations. Special Envoy Williamson asked Lino whether tensions in Abyei will die down without a demarcated north-south border in Abyei. Lino responded, "We've told the NCP how important this is." Lino stated that he has suggested inviting the authors of the ABC

report back to Sudan to explain the report, as "the NCP doesn't truly understand what they are arguing against." Lino said that these NCP leaders have rejected such offers saying, "If we invite them back, they will only confuse us even more." He concluded that until the north-south border is delineated, the region will remain tense, "though there will not be an explosion anytime soon."

DINKA-MISSERIYA CONFERENCE IN MAY

¶4. (C) Lino announced that he is planning for another Dinka and Misseriya conference scheduled for May. He said that other neighboring tribes, such as the Nuer and the Hamar, will be invited to attend. He also stated that international NGOs, USAID, and other international organizations will be invited to participate. Lino said that he expects that the NCP will not like this initiative, "but that we will go ahead anyway." Lino said that a coordination committee for this conference will meet for the first time on February 27, and said that the European Union has promised to pay for this conference.

ABYEI ADMINISTRATION AND BENCHMARKS

¶5. (C) Lino stated that the SPLM has appointed a group of ministers to the Abyei Administration. Lino specifically acknowledged one observer in the meeting, Choul Arop, the newly appointed Minister of Agriculture and Natural Resources. Lino also stated that other appointees are in Juba "gathering and discussing future plans." Lino stated that until now NGOs and civil society organizations have essentially been an informal administration providing necessary services and filling many roles of a local administration.

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¶6. (C) AF/SPG officer inquired what benchmarks the USG should consider for NCP progress on Abyei. Lino responded that there are many small things, such as allocating 2% of oil revenues to the different tribes, that should have been completed a long time ago. "For three years, oil has been flowing from our region and we have nothing coming to us," said Lino. Lino said there is no excuse for this delay, as a mechanism for dividing oil revenue has been established. Lino stated that there are approximately one billion U.S. dollars in arrears owed to Abyei.

IDPs AND DEVELOPMENT

¶7. (C) Lino stated that the biggest problem facing newly returned internally displaced persons is access to water. He said that 60,000 IDPs returned to Abyei and that he expects more soon (specifically noting that another 2,000 are scheduled to arrive to Abyei tomorrow.) S/E Williamson asked for an estimate of the total number of IDPs from Abyei, and he responded, "There are more than 200,000, probably closer to 300,000 and they are spread around all of Sudan in Khartoum, Kassala, Dongola." Lino noted that the infrastructure in Abyei is struggling to sustain the IDPs, naming health clinics, roads, and schools as primary needs.

¶8. (C) USAID Sudan Director, Patrick Fleuret, stated that Lino's list of Abyei's needs corresponds with a needs assessment survey by USAID. He stated that staff have been working in Blue Nile, Kordofan, and Abyei implementing small scale projects and planning for larger infrastructure developments. He stated that before larger projects can begin, USAID needs more cooperation from the local authorities on planning for the safety and well-being of USAID staff. Fleuret noted that the governor of Blue Nile state has been particularly cooperative and that work on larger road projects has already commenced. He urged the administrations in Abyei and Kordofan to follow Blue Nile's lead.

DARFUR

¶9. (C) Lino stated that he continues to see the SPLM Darfur Task Force as an important body and remains a member. Lino stated that he would like see countries interested in Darfur transformed into a Darfur Partners Group, an institution similar to Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the mechanism that supported north-south negotiations leading up to the CPA (or the IGAD Partners Forum). Lino also criticized the work of the United Nations in Darfur saying that the "UN way has not focused attention on Darfur in an adequate way. The humanitarian situation has worsened," adding that the Partners Form is the best alternative to the UN. Lino stated that many Darfur rebel movements have united, leaving five major groups (in contrast to the over 20 divisions that existed before Sirte.) Lino dismissed most civil society organizations currently playing a role in Darfur as hopelessly compromised, as all of these organizations are influenced by the NCP. Lino stated that Deby continues to support Darfur rebel groups working inside Sudan. "As Deby's fears grow, so too do the number of arms that enter Sudan," noted Lino. Lino stated that the Canadians and Dutch recently proposed a "food for peace" arrangement that, in his view, should be supported. This would provide for rebel needs while keeping them from looting and raiding and make monitoring and ceasefire verification by UNAMID easier.

¶10. (C) S/E Williamson asked what lessons the SPLM has learned (especially in its transformation from an armed movement to a political body) that might apply to Darfur's rebel movements. Lino emphasized that there is progress in bringing the rebels together, noting that in their first days in Juba there was much hostility and mistrust. He noted that after one month, "there was a new and remarkable way of doing things." Returning to the concept of food for peace, Lino stated, "We in the SPLM had a program of food for peace, and the Darfur rebel groups should be given the same chance. Once they are fed, then we can train them." Lino noted that a lack of basic material needs encourages the rebels' banditry, factionalism, and inclination to violence.

¶11. (C) S/E Williamson closed the meeting stating that on his next visit to Sudan, he will try his best visit Abyei. He said he is aware of the danger of the situation there and will monitor the events closely.

¶12. (C) COMMENT: Lino appeared confident that Abyei's administration was finally forming, though he failed to give

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significant details about the appointments and their next actions. With a quiet confidence, a background as an SPLM spy chief, and first hand involvement in Sudan's two hottest regions, and a critical analysis of the NCP's role in these crises, Lino may be the right leader for Abyei at this very sensitive, if not explosive, time but he needs as much material and moral support as the international community can muster. END COMMENT.

¶13. (U) S/E Williamson did not have an opportunity to clear on this cable before his departure to Darfur.
FERNANDEZ